



2003 End-of-Session Budget Update



17th Legislative District

Rep. Marc Boldt

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Visit <http://hrc.leg.wa.gov> for
news and information from the
House Republican Caucus.

**17th District office is
now open! Stop by and
say hello at:**

1311 SE Grace, Suite 203
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Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The 2003 legislative session adjourned June 11, after completing its regular 105-day session and two special sessions. After spending months in Olympia, it's nice to be back home to enjoy the warm days of summer with my family and neighbors.

We began the session with a record \$2.6 billion budget deficit and talk of possible tax increases to solve the problem. My main priorities this session were to block an increase in taxes, create jobs and restore the public's trust in government.

In the end taxpayers came out the winners. The Legislature was successful in balancing the budget without raising general-fund taxes.

This newsletter highlights some of the major issues. As always, I want to know your thoughts. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or comments.

As always, I look forward to hearing your views.

Sincerely,

Marc Boldt



Building a responsible state budget that lives within our means

Adopting a responsible, sustainable operating budget was the Legislature's number one priority this session. The reality is the \$2.6 billion deficit didn't happen overnight. Rather it snowballed after several years of adopting unsustainable budgets that were balanced by resorting to gimmicks. I began the session with a strong resolve not to make matters worse by digging out of our budget hole with tax increases. Doing so would only further hurt our economy.



To ensure a no-new tax budget was adopted, I worked with fellow Republicans in the House and Senate to create a responsibly balanced budget and develop policies that will put Washington on the track to economic recovery and bring some common sense back to government. Although the sailing wasn't always smooth, House Republicans held together and worked with Senate Budget Chairman Dino Rossi and Governor Gary Locke to prevent a \$770 million tax increase proposed by House Democrats.

It is important to note that even without raising taxes, our state's operating budget grew by nearly 2 percent.

Here's what we were able to accomplish without raising taxes:

- ✓ Teachers in the first seven years of their careers will get a deserved salary increase.
- ✓ By the second year of the budget, starting teachers will earn more than \$30,000 a year.
- ✓ The budget includes \$30 million more for class-size reductions than the governor requested, boosting the per-pupil grant to \$254 per student.
- ✓ Colleges will be allowed to increase in-state undergraduate tuition by up to 7 percent in each of the next two academic years.
- ✓ The state-subsidized Basic Health Plan for the working poor will provide for 100,000 people – an increase of 40,000 over the governor's proposal.
- ✓ The budget funds parks – no additional parks will be closed.

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- ✓ The budget provides funding for county health departments.
- ✓ The state's \$400 million windfall from the federal tax-relief bill will be kept unspent as a hedge against an expected revenue downturn later this year.

Creating a better economy and jobs for families

I'm happy to report the 2003 session adopted significant reforms to improve our state's business climate and encourage employers, such as Boeing, to invest and expand job opportunities in Washington:

- New investments in our transportation infrastructure and efficiency reforms to give us the most for our taxpayer dollar;
- Reforms to the state's costly unemployment insurance system;
- Reforms to our state's workers' compensation systems to ensure fairness and predictability; and
- Tax incentives for new aerospace investments to entice Boeing's 7E7 assembly to Washington.

In order to provide quality schools for our children, affordable health care for our families and seniors, and protect our pristine natural environment we must also have a healthy state economy.

We need to do more work to continue to strengthen our economy and stimulate job growth, but the accomplishments of this session have finally put us on the right course.

Local Capital Budget projects

The 2003 –2005 capital budget will provide more than \$1.5 million for four community projects in the 17th District:

- ✓ \$241,141 for Maple Crest Park
- ✓ \$300,000 for Haagen Park
- ✓ \$497,000 for Hockinson Park
- ✓ \$500,000 for Firstenberg Park

Progress made in access to health care; but there's still more to accomplish

The Legislature made some progress in its effort to provide quality care to more Washingtonians, but there is much to be done to make health care more affordable and available to all.



Lawmakers took a step in the right direction with prescription drug legislation designed to save the state money when it purchases medications for people who rely on government-funded health coverage. It's disappointing, however,

that House Republicans' push for senior prescription drug assistance, which would have done even more to help seniors get the medicine they need, was halted. Also, it will be important to monitor progress of the new law that did pass to make sure it really helps those who need assistance. The bottom line: we still must do more for our seniors and that work should continue next session.

Another victory this session can be found in new effectiveness and cost-efficiencies for government health coverage. Reforming and redesigning the Basic Health Plan — that offers subsidized and nonsubsidized health care coverage for low-income people without any federal funding — **will make it more affordable to cover more Washingtonians (100,000 enrollees) without continued cost overruns for taxpayers.**

Looking forward to next session, a major priority will be to make much-needed changes to medical malpractice and small-group health insurance as well as the state's Medicaid program in the area of reimbursements to doctors and hospitals. Excessive government mandates make health insurance too costly and force more lower- and middle-income workers to go without coverage. Small-group reform is still needed to help employers offer affordable coverage to their employees.

✂ Cut here and mail.

What do you think?

If you would like more information and periodic legislative updates, please provide the information at right.

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ and/or

E-Mail: _____